



Running Blind 2018 Annual Report

12-20-18

Hello friends, Running Blind members and supporters!

I hope 2018 has treated you well. For me the year had some wonderful high points and some pretty low, low points. A high point for me and for Running Blind was the Adventure Camp that I co-sponsored and helped organize again this past July with OUB. That was held in northern Michigan including 5 days up in the UP and 3 days in northern Michigan in the Lake Charlevoix area. Another fairly high point for me personally was my retirement from Ford. They offered me (and others) a generous buyout offer, so after 33 years there it was an offer I couldn't refuse, and I didn't. But unfortunately that was coupled with a low point as the week I retired in August I was also diagnosed with prostate cancer that had already spread. For someone like me who has been incredibly active and very healthy my entire life, to be hit with that diagnosis, well it's been hard to comprehend and accept, but it's very real. I'm about to start radiation therapy and I sure hope it knocks me into a remission for a good long time, but having cancer is my new reality.

2018 Running Blind Adventure Camp – it was a big success! (see pics on p4)



The 2018 camp was an ambitious 9 day trip that included 8 visually impaired youth, 10 OUB staff members (Opportunities Unlimited for the Blind), 9 of whom were visually impaired, and a few OUB support people and a couple of adult volunteers such as myself. Please take a look at the trip report on the website to get an idea of the activities and the effort required to organize an effort like that. (Hint – it's a huge effort, on the part of Gwen Botting of OUB, her entire staff, and with help from me.) There was a bit of difficulty on a rafting trip that I lead, but other than

that, it all went very well and it ended on a spectacular day on Lake Charlevoix with all of the kids and staffers enjoying a nice boat ride and most also enjoying some tubing behind the boat. The boating has become a popular favorite with the group, and I can honestly say that without Running Blind's participation and sponsorship of that particular event, it wouldn't happen. OUB has large financial constraints for a paid staff and other financial commitments, and spending \$800 for a boat ride would not fit into their budget, but for Running Blind to take that on and provide the group with an exciting final activity, well it really hits the sweet spot for a awesome activity that the kids all love, so it is an excellent collaboration with the two groups to enable an exciting conclusion to the trip that OUB could not offer without the support of Running Blind.

Our Guide Pairings

Some more good news for us is that all of our active guide pairings that we had last year have made it through this year, which by itself is a great bit of success, since we have come to learn very well that any such pairing can be fickle and short lived if both parties aren't on the same page about the relationship or don't share the same commitment level, but these all worked!

I'm happy to report that the following pairings worked out again this year:

- 1) Sile & her guide Mikel Gurrea Rubio.** Sile broke a leg and hasn't been able to run lately, but she told me that she and Mikel have still taken weekly walks as much as her leg has allowed. She seems to be getting better and hopefully they will be running again soon.
- 2) Geri Feigelson & her guide David Saperstein** who completed the DxA2 half marathon together this summer. Geri has also been hoping to participate in the Bayshore half Marathon but David can't make that commitment, so Geri is looking for guide support.
- 3) Sarahelizabeth & guide Mary Miilu & alternate guide Katie Ralston** all continued to run together this year in the Holland MI area. Holland has an interesting amenity – they have heated sidewalks downtown, so that provides a safe ice-free location that they can run in the winter.
- 4) Rory & his guide Sarah Croak** in Pleasantville NY are doing weekly runs together as weather allows – often on a track near Rory's house.

Personal message from Mary Miilu – guide for Sarahelizabeth: *“We haven't been able to run since September because Zabet (Sarahelizabeth) had surgery October 1, and with the holidays, it was just too busy to find time once she was cleared for activity. We plan to resume after the New Year. The one thing I can say about my experience is it has been amazing that she doesn't use her blindness as an obstacle for anything, and she is confident that she can accomplish whatever she sets her mind to. It puts things into perspective for me and not take things for granted. It has been an enjoyable experience. Thanks again for reaching out...”*

Guide(s) needed in PA: We had a new member that has signed up on our website asking for guide support – a woman who lives in Glenside PA (which is about 20 miles north of Philadelphia) is hoping to find someone to run with her. So far we have not had any luck with a pairing for her in that area, but we are still looking. If you know someone near there that might be willing to help out as a guide, please let us know.

Saying Good-bye to the Ann Arbor Track Club's Gallup Gallop 5K

After directing the AATC's Gallup Gallop 5K for the past 5 years as a fund raiser for Running Blind, with the attendance and proceeds slipping every year, I decided it was time to move on. I helped a recruit new director who stepped up kept the event going but it is no longer one that supports Running Blind, so I hope that people further consider making an annual donation to support our cause to help offset this loss. (If I take on another 5K run, it will be an independent event to support Running Blind or cancer research, or both. Not sure yet when that may happen.)

Other News – Welcome to Abby and the return of Osman!

One great bit of news to share is that former Running Blind supporter Osman “Ozzie” Karoma and his new fiancé Abby Tongue (who is a former OUB employee) have agreed to come on board and help out. Abby will help with communications such as newsletters and things, and Geri, who has been helping in this area, will stay on and help with more informal but no less important direct communications with our visually impaired runners. Abby is fully sighted and has a great interest in supporting the visually impaired community (she is studying that in school) so I think this arrangement will work out well. Osman will help look for financial support in the form of grants, which have proven to be elusive so far for our fledgling non-profit.

Running Blind 2018 Fundraising Campaign (Link to [RB donation page](#))

I may sound like a broken record, but I again realize that I need to put more effort into fundraising. I had to find a new online fundraising portal as the one I had been using (Givlet) went belly-up, and the one I switched to (ActiveGiving.com) just did the same. Rats! So now I just had to set up a third one. And I did send a note this summer to my entire list of people asking for support for the adventure camp. That brought in support from 13 people for a total of \$1,500. The support is greatly appreciated, but it seems I need to work harder to let people know the magnitude of the effort and the benefits we create. As a local charity that works as hard as we do to provide support to blind people in need, something must be missing. One thing I have been aware of for a while is that we’d like to help more people with guide pairings, but that has become problematic as the amount of work required to create a pairing is fairly large, and I can’t afford to pay people what it would take to increase our numbers. I also can’t do it all myself. What I can say with certainty is that **in 2018 we made a positive impact on 23 blind people** between our guided pairs and the adventure camp. To do that for \$1,500 is pretty phenomenal I think, but I did have to dig into our savings. We will keep marching forward, as we must.

With your help, we could offer more than we do now, and at also create a more stable ability to plan and budget for staff support and activities. That would really help, and if you can consider supporting our 2018 campaign with even \$30, that would be fantastic and if so I can promise you two things: 1) all the money you donate will be spent wisely helping people that benefit greatly from our support, 2) your name will be listed on our website as a supporter and 3) you feel better about yourself and the world you live in! (The third one is a bonus!) How can you beat all that?! I hope you consider supporting us and either way I hope 2019 is a great year for all of you. Thanks, Happy Holidays, peace, and keep on runnin’!

Thanks to our guides and to our donors! *(All donors are listed on the website.)*

Our running partnerships won’t work without both financial support and the committed support of our volunteer guides. Our guides are truly the heart of our organization. Thanks to all of you!

Mikel Gurrea Rubio – guide for Sile in Ann Arbor MI since 2015

Tom Kelner – guide for Paul in Dallas Texas since 2016

David Saperstein – guide for Geri in W. Bloomfield MI since 2016

Sarah Croak – guide for Rory in New York since 2017

Mary Miilu (& Katie Ralston) – guides for Saraelizebeth in Holland MI since 2017

We need guides in: Glenside PA (north of Philly), Columbus OH and London England, and someone to help Geri race walk a half marathon in Traverse City on May 25, 2019.

Hal Wolfe - Running Blind Director & Founder

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2018 Adventure Camp - trip highlight photos



**Halen, Angela
& driver**



4 wheelers!



Cali



**Max & docent
at Fort**



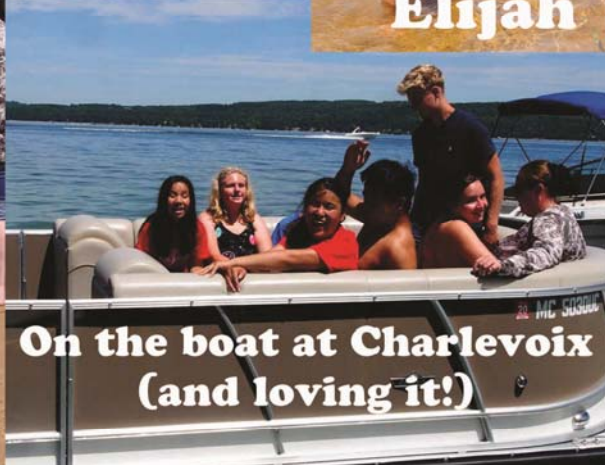
**Miner's
Falls -
Angie
& Jules**



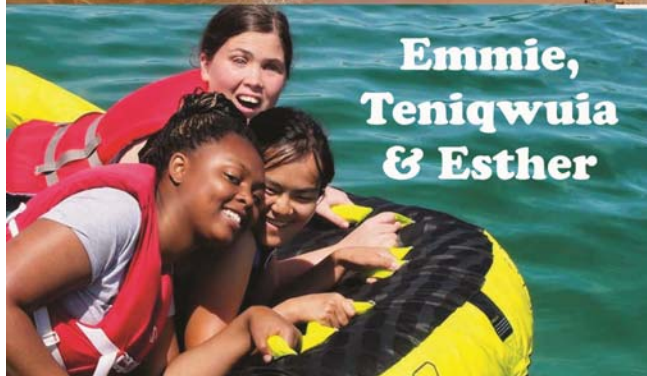
Elijah



Wading in Lake Superior



**On the boat at Charlevoix
(and loving it!)**



**Emmie,
Teniqwua
& Esther**



**Max, Angela
and Teniqwua**

Please visit **RunningBlind.org** and see the full trip report with more info and lots more pictures! Link: <http://runningblind.org/RunningBlind/AdventureCamp.php>